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Front Cover: *TSgt Ben Bloker*



## SAFETY IS CLEARLY EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

My time is up as Chief of Safety. Having the opportunity to serve as the command's safety lead has been truly an honor. During my 29 months, Air Combat Command has certainly led the way in the defense of our country. We should all be proud of our roles in defending the country, pursuing terrorism, and freeing both Iraq and Afghanistan.

While addressing safety issues is challenging, safety is just, noble work. It makes a difference in the lives and well being of the men & women of Air Combat Command. The disheartening aspect of the job has been the all too frequent preventable mishaps. About every 15 days I get the word of another young airman who killed himself by exceeding their limits. It has not been our risky business that kills or permanently maims our airman, but inadequate risk management and the fundamental breakdown in discipline, conduct, and behavior. It manifests itself in speeding, driving all night, inappropriate and excessive alcohol use, reckless driving, and simply not using seat belts.

It has been a turbulent time and there has been a lot of uncertainty in the force. Many supervisors have been deployed or occupied by force protection duties, so others have had to pick up the reins. But it has been peer leadership that has fallen short most often. This occurs when we let our peers do things that endanger themselves or others without saying anything. While we are all airmen 24/7 and ultimately responsible for our actions, we can still do a lot to mentor and ingrain the proper habits and right kinds of behavior in our teammates and subordinates. Don't let the little things slide, because it is those good habits that protect us when we are faced with something new.

As an engaged Air Combat Command leader, you won't know if your actions and words save a life ... but the reverse is too often the case. So as COMACC says, "don't miss an opportunity to stress safety." To all the men and women of Air Combat Command, I salute what you do for America day-in and day-out!

**Colonel Kevin W. Smith**  
**ACC Chief of Safety**



Photo by SSgt Christopher Mathews